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## I. EXTRACTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

### 1. *From a Letter from Rev. A. H. Wright, M. D., of Orûmiah.*

Oroomiah, Persia, Aug. 21st, 1855.

In a recent letter to Mr. Perkins, you intimated that some intelligence relative to the state of education in Persia would be interesting to you. A friend residing in Tabreez has furnished me with information on the subject, relative to that place, which may be taken as a standard for most of the large towns in the country.

The population of Tabreez is about one hundred thousand, of whom my friend supposes that two-thirds are able to read and write the Persian language. He gives the number of schools of all kinds in the place as one hundred, that is, one school to every thousand of the population. Of this number ten are seminaries of a high order, containing from eighty to a hundred pupils each. These are public institutions, free to all who wish to attend. The instruction is given by learned men as a charitable act, or by those who have received an allowance from some wealthy persons for this object.

There are fifty schools attached to the Mosques, the pupils of each numbering from thirty to fifty. The teachers in these schools are supported by an assessment of from ten to twenty-five cents a month on each scholar, the amount varying according to the studies.

The remaining forty schools are of a private character, consisting each of from ten to fifteen pupils. They are connected with private families of rank and wealth, who employ a teacher for their own children. Often a few children of their relatives, dependents, or neighbors are allowed to attend the school.

The course of study throughout all the schools of the country is essentially the same. In all the primary schools it is as follows, viz. 1. The reading of the Korân in Arabic, without any attempt to understand its meaning. 2. The Gulistân of Saadi in Persian in the same manner; subsequently it is read again, and translated into Turkish. 3. The writings of Hâfiz. 4. Certain works in Persian on the mode of performing the prescribed prayers, and of purifying the body. 5. Certain historical works in Persian celebrated for elegance of style. 6. The elements of Grammar in Arabic. 7. Syntax, Etymology, and Prosody, also in Arabic.

In the schools of a higher grade, the studies are Logic, Law, civil and religious, Interpretation, Tradition, Medicine, Mathematics, Astronomy and Geometry.

The knowledge of Chemistry is confined to those who pretend to transmute the baser metals into gold. It is universally believed in the country that this is practicable, and also that there are some persons who possess the secret. They are said to be wandering Der-vishes, going about in the garb of extreme poverty, for fear of the civil authorities, who might force them to reveal their secret, if they were known to possess it. There are many in all parts of the country, who spend their lives and waste their means, in the vain pursuit of a universal solvent.

Astronomy as a science is cultivated by a few persons. The old Ptolemaic theory, making the earth the centre, around which the heavenly bodies revolve, is still universally maintained. Eclipses are calculated, and almanacs constructed. Until recently the almanacs were all manuscripts, and but a few copies were prepared, which were purchased only by the rich and noble. For some years they have been printed at Tabreez, and scattered over the country at a very cheap rate. Astrology forms a leading department in the almanac. Events for the year are foretold, peace or war, plenty or famine, &c. Favorable hours are also indicated for starting on a journey, laying the foundations of a house, for the tailor to cut out a garment, &c.

The Persians are excessively fond of poetry, and venerate those who have a reputation for poetic talent. The Shah has his favorite poet, who is called the *Shems-i-Shuâr*, the Sun of Poets. His attempts are mostly confined to the composition of short pieces, which are recited in public on festival occasions, and consist of praises of God, praises of Mohammed, and fulsome flattery of the Shah. At the present time there are no poets of great distinction in the country; Saadi, Hâfiz, and Firdusi remain unrivalled.

You have heard of the Government College at Tehran called the *Dâr-el-f'noon*, the Door of the Sciences. It is not intended for the benefit of the community at large. It is wholly a government institution, the object of which is to raise up government servants. The pupils, now numbering a hundred, all receive a stipend from the public treasury, and as soon as they are qualified they are taken into active service. The yearly expenses of the College are about forty thousand dollars. Seven professors are employed in it, four of whom are Austrian subjects, one a Frenchman, one a Neapolitan, and one a Persian. Their departments are as follows. 1. Infantry tactics. 2. Cavalry tactics. 3. Artillery tactics. (The three professors in charge of these departments also drill the Persian troops, many of whom are always assembled at the Capital.) 4. Engineering, including Mathematics, Geometry, etc. 5. The Theory and Practice of Medicine and Surgery. 6. *Materia Medica*. (The teacher in this department has charge of the government apothecary

establishment.) 7. The French language. This language is studied by the Shah himself, who receives lessons from his private physician, who is a Frenchman. Many young officers of the government have acquired a respectable knowledge of that tongue. One of them has nearly completed the translation of *Telemaque* into Persian.

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2. *From a Letter of Rev. W. M. Thomson to Dr. DeForest.*

Sidon, Nov. 30, 1855.

Sidon is now all in a state of excitement about Phenician antiquities, being dug up at Magharet Tubloon. That whole neighborhood is being cut up with trenches, in search of these antiquities. The Alellas [?] and French consul are the chief diggers. They are finding beautiful marble sarcophagi, with exquisite figures carved on the lids, like that with the inscription on it, but none of those recently found have any writing on them. They are, however, very curious, and what is still more curious is the immense depth of these rooms. I examined a room yesterday afternoon from which two of these beautiful sarcophagi have been taken. A square shaft was sunk through the rock at least twenty feet deep; from it, low doors lead into rooms, where the coffins were placed in niches below the floor, which was of strong *hajarieh* [cement]. No one would suspect that anything lay buried beneath this *hajarieh*, and the effort to conceal the tombs was successful up to this day: these sarcophagi had never been disturbed. I was present at the opening of one. Two *sanburiehs* [baskets] of rotten bones were gathered out of it. There were small bits of gold among them, but nothing of value. There seems to be no end to these rooms; chambers lie over chambers, and no one yet knows to what depth they may be found. You would be astonished to see the excitement which these things create in our usually quiet community.

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3. *From a Letter from Prof. C. Lassen, of Bonn.*

Bonn, 12th Jan., 1856.

You will be glad to learn that the printing of the first Part of the third volume of my *Indische Alterthumskunde*, which has been so long deferred, is about to begin, so that I hope that it will come forth in the course of this summer.

4. *From a Letter from Rev. D. T. Stoddard, of Orûmiah.*

Seir, Oroomiah, July 8th, 1856.

I should be exceedingly thankful for a review of my Grammar [of the Modern Syriac Language; see above, pp. 1-180] by a competent person, which should point out its defects, which I am myself sensible are not few. They are perhaps, however, not more numerous than might be expected from one who had had no previous experience in this kind of composition, and whose time and thoughts are mainly engrossed with other pursuits. I regret much that the book was not divided into paragraphs and sections, so as to admit of frequent and easy reference from one part to another. An arrangement of this kind would have rendered many passages plain, which are now more or less obscure, and would have greatly facilitated the student's progress.

The educated Jew, who was with us for a time, has now left the Seminary, and I rarely come in contact with him, so that I have not finished preparing the sketch of the modern Jews' language of Persia which I undertook some time ago. It will be my aim to forward it to you in the course of the next winter. If possible, I shall get the Jew above mentioned to write out all the forms in the Hebrew character, and shall then myself, while listening to his pronunciation of each word, write it down in the Syriac character. If either the Hebrew or the Syriac character should be used alone, I fear that, with many readers, this would go far toward determining the unsettled and really difficult question, whether the language is to be referred to the Chaldee or to the ancient Syriac. It is very likely, however, that a thorough investigation will show that it is not strictly a descendant of either of those languages, but rather derived from the Aramæan, from which they themselves sprang.



5. *From a Letter from W. W. Turner, Esq.*

Washington, D. C., Aug. 28, 1856.

The Smithsonian Institution has at length received the volume and the fac-similes [of the Phœnician inscription of Sidon] presented to it by the Duc de Luynes, in compliance with our joint request. The fac-similes are of stout white paper, produced, I suppose, by dampening the paper, laying it on the marble, and rubbing it with a hard point into all the depressions, so that the outline and depth

of every letter, and of every flaw in the stone, are represented with the greatest exactness. These fac-similes comprise both the complete inscription on the top of the sarcophagus, and the imperfect one which runs round its head. The former measures two feet nine inches from top to bottom, and the sixth line is two feet nine and a half inches in length. The partial inscription is four feet seven inches long: the letters are rather smaller, slenderer, and neater than those of the full inscription.

These fac-similes, exhibiting as they do the very "form and pressure" of the letters traced and engraved by Phenician hands, are intensely interesting.

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## II. IDEAS RESPECTING AN ALPHABET SUITED TO THE LANGUAGES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA. By Prof. C. A. HOLMBOE, of Christiania, Norway.

[This essay, with the letter accompanying it, was not received in New Haven until Dec. 1855, having been detained upon the way; which is the cause of its appearing so long after being composed.]

Christiania, Feb. 15th, 1854.

Six months ago, I received from a committee of American missionaries in the neighborhood of Port Natal, in Southern Africa, an invitation to act as member of a committee composed of Professors Salisbury and Gibbs of Yale College, of Professor Pott at Halle, and of one English and one French gentleman, who were not yet designated, to invent and establish an alphabet suitable to all the languages of Southern Africa. The distance of the members from one another makes oral discussion impracticable: the only possible method of contributing anything to the important object will be, then, to communicate mutually our ideas in writing. Accordingly I take the liberty of sending you annexed my ideas respecting a South-African alphabet, begging you to receive them favorably, and to make such use of them as shall seem good to you.

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It appears that those who have written on this subject, are agreed with respect to the following points:

1st. That the alphabet of the civilized nations of Europe ought to be employed for all the sounds which occur in the South-African languages.